

REMARKS

These remarks are in response to the Office Action dated November 15, 2006. Claims 1-78 were pending in the application at the time of examination.

The Examiner has allowed claims 27-47 and 61-78. Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for the allowance of these claims.

The Examiner has set forth minor informalities involving objections to the specification.

Claims 1-15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being unpatentable over U.S. Pat. No. 4,570,217 ("Allen").

Claims 48-60 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being unpatentable over U.S. Pat. No. 6,775,595 ("Yabutani").

Claims 16, 17 and 21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Allen in view of U.S. Pat. No. 5,684,710 ("Ehlers").

Claims 18-20 and 22-26 have been objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

I. Minor Informalities Regarding The Specification

The Examiner objected to the disclosure of paragraphs [0001], [0003] and [0004] of the specification because the appropriate patent numbers were not referenced for the related applications, and the appropriate serial numbers were not referenced for other applications. Applicants respectfully submit that substitute paragraphs [0001], [0003], and [0004], presented above, correct these minor deficiencies, and respectfully request entry of same.

II. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for the allowance of claims 27-47 and 61-78.

With respect to claims 18-20 and 22-26, which were objected to, applicants have amended dependent claim 18 to include all of the limitations of independent base claim 16. As such, claim 18 is in condition for allowance. Dependent claims 19 and 20 ultimately depend from claim 18, and therefore are also in condition for allowance.

Similarly, applicants have amended dependent claim 22 to include all of the limitations of independent base claim 16 and intervening claim 21. As such, claim 22 is in

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condition for allowance. Dependent claims 23 and 24 ultimately depend from claim 22, and therefore are also in condition for allowance.

Further, applicants have amended dependent claim 25 to include all of the limitations of independent base claim 16, and have amended dependent claim 26 to include all of the limitations of independent base claim 16. Therefore, claims 25 and 26 are in condition for allowance.

It should be noted that rejected claims 1-17, 21 and 48-60 have been cancelled, solely to expedite issuance of the present application.

CONCLUSION

Each of the rejections in the Office Action dated November 15, 2006 has been addressed and no new matter has been added. Applicants submit that all of pending claims 18-20, 22-47, and 61-78 are in condition for allowance and notice to this effect is respectfully requested. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney if such communication would expedite the prosecution of this application.

Respectfully submitted,



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